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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""

It's been a very strange week. And, I'm not sure how to explain it. The
week started off so weirdly, that I took advantage of an offer to play some
golf midway through the week, down in Maine. It was a terrific diversion.

I also had some interesting issues with my faithful Falcon030. I've been
running it for many years now, but lately, it's been acting up. Part of the
problem has been hardware (the internal hard drive died ages ago and the
internal floppy drive has been acting up), but the other problem has been
the fact that a variety of floppy disks that I use have been getting
corrupted - probably due to age. Many of the programs that I've been using
have been either AUTO folder programs, or accessories. Well, finally, the
Warp9 boot-up program was failing to load. Atari computers are slow to
begin with, but after being used to running fast PCs all day long, a
Warp9-less Falcon seems unbearably slow. It took me three days to finally
get my Falcon to boot with Warp9 intact! All of the sudden, the Falcon is a
speed demon again! Thankfully. I was getting nervous that my Atari
machines were finally showing their age by more than just years. But at the
moment, all is well with the world again. Oh, that internal drive that's
dead - I just bypass it and boot from a floppy configuration and take
advantage of a couple of external drives connected to the machine. Works
effectively enough for my needs. So, a good friend and tool remains
faithful for a bit longer. Long live Atari machines!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and
Mother Nature is again showing us that she's in control. Hurricane
Ophelia is just sitting off the coast, dumping rain upon North Carolina
like there's no tomorrow.

But of course there will be a tomorrow, and things will slowly return to

normal for most of us. But beyond all that we can do, Mother Nature will settle back and do whatever she wants to do regardless of our wishes.

It's always annoyed me that one of the remarks that Mark Twain is most famous for is that "Everyone complains about the weather, but no one does anything about it". Yes, I understand that his intent was a gentle mocking of the human propensity for self-importance, but I've always felt that it left something un-said.

We have, of course, done something about it, although it's not exactly what Mr. Clemens had in mind. And while some still doubt the extent if not the fact of our handiwork, the scientific community is solidly behind the idea that we are indeed having an effect on our environment.

I wonder what Twain would have thought of some of the arguments going on around us today. Although he presented the persona of a mild mannered country boy, he actually had a keen, probing mind, and was scientifically inclined. I can imagine him sitting in the parlor of his Hartford, Connecticut home (a handful of minutes from where I now sit), discussing everything from global warming to man's inhumanity to man.

I can't swear to this, but I'll bet that one could go through his collected works and quotes and piece together an opinion on just about anything that's going on currently, from global warming to politics to the space program. Of course, if TWO people did it, I'm also betting that they could come up with two different viewpoints on just about everything. And y'know what? I'd also be willing to bet that the old guy would have something to say about THAT too.

Well, let's get on with the hints, tips, news and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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David Leaver asks for assistance with his Ethernet setup:

"My Falcon is running Magic 6.2 and MagicNet. I have one of Elmar Hilgart's cartridge-port ethernet adaptors which, with Vassilis's RTL8012.MIF driver, works nicely with an ADSL router/modem in 68030 mode.

However, although I have had no other problems with the CT63 (touch wood), this combination does not work in 68060 mode. Some things seem to trying to happen, in that the activity light on the adaptor flashes, but I can't establish any communication. I can't even ping the router.

My '060 is the full version, so I hope that the note in CT60/63 ST-Guide file about the cartridge port does not apply.

As I have put my hand up for an EtherNAT, getting this working may be a waste of time but I'd still like to try.

Any bright ideas?

By the way, the above set-up works nicely with my ST, MSTe and TT."

Djuro Pucaric tells David:

"Well, there was a special 060 driver written for STiNG and ethernec so
this probably means that there should be special 060 driver for this
setup..."

Robert Schaffner adds:

"I used the same interface on CT2 Falcon.
If i got the interface new, it doesn't work in CT2 mode.

Elmar modified the driver to the faster (CT2) rom port timing.
With the modified driver the interface works great on CT2 falcon.

I think you had the same problem."

Jean-Luc Ceccoli asks for help with partitioning a hard disk:

"I've come into trouble trying to partition many IDE drives from 15 to
20 GB on both my CT60'ed Falcons and my C-Lab MK-I one.
I couldn't succeed so far.
So, could someone (owning CT60 if possible) please try the following :
1- prepare a boot floppy with HD-Driver 8(.16),
2- attach at least a 15 GB IDE drive,
3- boot from floppy,
4- set at least 16 partitions of 8 MB each,
5- try to install the driver,
6- try to access the partition menu again,
7- return here and tell us... "

Ronald Hall tells Jean-Luc:

"I've got an 80 gig IDE Maxtor hard drive on my Falcon. I'm using v8.15
of HDDriver. I don't have it put back together yet, so what I say goes a
bit from memory.

IIRC, I used partitions C through P, which is about 14 partitions. I
made them almost the maximum limit under TOS 4.92. I believe it was
something like 950 megs each. (isn't 1 gig the limit?).

This worked. However, again - if I recall correctly, at some point when
I was running HDDriver to set everything up, I had to reboot at least
once for everything to show up correctly."

Unfortunately, as I mentioned in the previous post, I don't have my
Falcon back together yet to try what you want. What is the problem you
are seeing/having?"

Dr. Uwe Seimet, author of HDDriver, explains about the rebooting:

"Rebooting is required because otherwise TOS cannot access the
additional partitions, i.e. those that were not present before
partitioning.

Rebooting is also required when the maximum partition size is bigger

than it was before. This in particular happens when the number of partitions is reduced, which can result in some partitions having bigger logical sector sizes than before. One could say that in general rebooting is required after partitioning."

Kenneth Medin asks about encoding MP3 and OGG files with his TT and AniPlayer:

"I'm having problems with latest Aniplayer 2.22 on my TT running Magic 6.20 related to the various SLB files.

To encode mp3's I need LAME_ENC.SLB but if I try the (only available) 68060 version I get an "68000 exception nr -69" and Aniplayer exits.

The doc's says:
 Requirements:
   - 68020 or higher
   - FPU or 68060
   - MiNT 1.15.3 or MagiC 6 or MetaDOS 2.74.

so I should be fine with my 68030 with fpu but it simply doesn't work at all!

However... if I use the older Aniplayer 2.20 LAME_ENC.SLB it's OK! Both the 68060 and 68881 versions work (68881 slightly faster).

The 2.22 version is compiled with Gcc 3.3 and 2.20 with Gcc 2.95.2.

It's also interesting that the same happens with AVCODEC.SLB when encoding mp2: 68020 (Gcc 2.95.2) is OK but 68060 (Gcc 3.3) exits with the same error -69. Here both versions are present in the aniplayer 2.22 package!

So far by mixing versions I'm able to write both mp2 and mp3.

To encode Ogg files VORB_ENC.SLB is used but unfortunately there is only a 68060 (Gcc 3.3) available in 2.22 and non at all in the 2.20 package. This version also exits with error -69, so at the moment I'm unable to encode Ogg files with Aniplayer.

Anyone with better luck on either TT or 68030 Falcon??"

Martin Tarenskeen tells Kenneth:

"Interesting test. Have you contacted the author about this issue ? I might have a similar problem on my Falcon030/CT2B+68882. I'll try using the codecs compiled with gcc 2.95.2 and see if this fixes the problems I'm currently having."

Kenneth tells Martin:

"Just did [contact the author].

But some of the SLB README's clearly state:
"compiled with Gcc 3.3 with -m68060 and libm2060"

and older ones:

"compiled with Gcc 2.95.2 with -m68020-60"

so it looks like 68030 support got dropped in the last 2.22 version.
It's really a slow process to encode to mp3 and ogg files. About 100
minutes to get a one minute file but still useful if you are not in a
hurry...

They say "slow food" is good for your stomach so maybe "slow computing"
is good for your brain!

I have now managed to get both mp3 and ogg encoding working by combining
SLB's from Aniplayer 2.20 (LAME_ENC.SLB), 2.21 (VORB_ENC.SLB) and 2.22
(AVCODEC.SLB).

The older versions can be found at:

http://perso.wanadoo.fr/didierm/files/anipl220.zip
http://perso.wanadoo.fr/didierm/files/anipl221.zip

This can definitely be confusing to anyone as you also have several
different SLB versions in all three Aniplayer versions..."

Luis Gomes asks about changing floppy drives:

"Anyone have a plan how to transform a floppy drive from TEAC ID1 into
ID0 with the solder links, so I can use it on my ste?"

Mark Bedingfield asks Luis:

"What model? Usually with the TEAC there are solder pads on the
underside of the drive. They are listed as ID0 and ID1. Move the SM
resistor 90 degrees. It is only a wire (0 ohm resistor) bridge, so if
you want you can bridge it with solder."

The conversation hasn't played itself out yet, but I figured the
information that Mark provided might help someone else too, so we'll
see what happens next week.

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time,
same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section   - Xbox 360 in November!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Tourneys Draw Big Sponsors!
                                    Asia Tackles Addiction!
                                    And much more!

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                  Microsoft To Ship Xbox 360 in November in U.S.

Microsoft Corp. said on Thursday its next-generation Xbox 360 video game
console would go on sale in North America on November 22, just before the
U.S. Thanksgiving holiday kicks off the year-end shopping season, followed
by European and Japanese debuts over the next three weeks.

The software giant aims to take the lead in the $25 billion video game
market from Sony Corp., which was first to market with a current generation
console. Sony's PlayStation 3 will trail the Xbox 360, debuting in the
spring.

Microsoft said the sleek, concave, white Xbox 360, which boasts
high-resolution graphics and wireless controllers, would be released on
December 2 in Europe and December 10 in Japan, the world's second-largest
game market.

While Xbox competes almost evenly with Sony's PlayStation 2 in the United
States, in Japan it runs a distant third behind Sony and Nintendo Co.'s
GameCube.

Microsoft had sold 470,624 Xboxes in Japan as of August. This compares with
Sony's 18.14 million cumulative PS2 sales, and Nintendo's 3.8 million
GameCube unit sales, according to Famitsu, Japan's leading game magazine.

"The Japanese market is the most important key for the Xbox's global
strategy. Microsoft is committing fully to its success in Japan,"
Yoshihiro Maruyama, general manager of the Xbox Division in Japan, told a
press conference.

"We will continue to make as much effort as we can to make the Xbox 360
successful in Japan," he said.

Seven games, including "Dead or Alive 4" from Tecmo Ltd., would be
available at the Japan launch and 20 titles would be ready by the end of
January 2006, Maruyama said.

Microsoft, which plans to sell separate high-end and "Core System" Xbox 360
bundles in the United States and Europe, will launch in Japan with just a
premium Xbox 360 package - priced at 37,900 yen compared with 34,800 yen
for the current Xbox and 39,800 yen for Sony's PS2 when it was launched.

The high-end package includes the new console, a wireless controller and
other accessories as well as a detachable hard drive needed to play certain
game titles written for the original Xbox and sophisticated games. It will
cost around $400 in the United States, $100 more than the Xbox 360 Core
System.

But Microsoft could cut consumer prices on that detachable hard-drive -

where prices have been dropping rapidly - if Sony's PS3 price comes in lower than the high-end Xbox 360.

Asked about the reason for launching only premium packages in Japan, Maruyama said Japanese gamers tended to have broadband connections, and more content requiring a hard drive would likely be available in the country than other regions.

But he did not rule out the possibility of introducing the cheaper Core System in Japan in the coming years.

The video game industry has become a mainstream entertainment industry rivaling Hollywood in its ability to create franchises.

First-day sales of blockbuster video games like Microsoft's "Halo 2" also regularly top movie opening-day ticket sales, although revenue drops off much faster.

Microsoft has not said how many Xbox 360 units it will ship, but it is aiming to break even on the hardware in the first year or two.

"We will wind up cost-reducing the product every year," Todd Holmdahl, corporate vice president of the Xbox product group, said in a recent interview.

Wedbush Morgan Securities video game analyst Michael Pachter projected Microsoft would have at least 2 million units ready for sale in the United States and Europe.

"In the U.S. they'll sell out at 1.5 million right away," Pachter said. "They won't last a week."

He expected 500,000-700,000 consoles ready in Europe. He had no estimates for Japan.

Microsoft vowed it would not be second this time around and plans to have 15 to 20 games ready at launch, with 25 to 40 ready by the end of 2005, Xbox chief Robbie Bach told the Reuters Technology and Telecoms Summit on Wednesday.

Analysts say that in Japan, Microsoft would do well to match current second-place console maker Nintendo, whose next-generation Revolution console is due in 2006.

Maruyama said a lack of compelling games was behind the sluggish sales of the current Xbox in Japan and that the key to the success of the next-generation console was improving the game lineup. He added that more than 100 titles were under development with most due to be available by the end of 2006.

Videogame Tourneys Draw Big-Time Sponsors

Is "frags per round" going to be the batting average of the 21st century? Professional computer gamers certainly hope so.

Players of Counter Strike, a popular title in competition at the U.S. finals of the World Cyber Games last week, count their prowess in how many

enemies they can shoot to pieces, or "fragment," in a frantic two-minute round of virtual gunplay.

Time and demographics, boosters say, argue for videogame tourneys becoming the next big spectator sport in the United States, where more than 108 million Americans now play computer games, according to the Yankee Group.

They're already garnering big-name sponsors.

"Kids in the early 1900s were playing baseball in dirt fields. Kids today are playing computer games" says Jason Lake, an Atlanta real-estate lawyer who owns two teams of pro gamers, totaling fourteen players, some of whom did battle last week.

For a non-gamer, the competition at New York's Hammerstein Ballroom can't have looked too exciting.

Pale young men crowded around computers on the floor as the cyberspace-based action unfolded on big-screen displays overhead, accompanied by a play-by-play announcer rattling off things like "Schwan's gonna be hiding behind a big box there, waiting for them to come up, and it's 7-0 for the counterterrorists on this map."

Only about 4,000 spectators showed up at the Hammerstein, organizers said, but more than 63,000 followed the games live on the Web.

Even more significantly, more than a million people around the world have tried to qualify for the final, to be held in Singapore in November. That's mostly a sign of the acceptance that computer gaming (or e-sports, as promoters like to call it) has gained in the rest of the world.

Just 40,000 of that million were Americans.

In South Korea, where the World Cyber Games is based, three cable channels broadcast competitive gaming around the clock and some of the country's approximately 200 professional gamers bask in rock star-like fame.

In the United States, "there are rock stars already, but the mass market doesn't know about them," says Robert Krakoff, president Razer Group, which makes computer mice and is a major sponsor of the games, along with Intel Corp. and Samsung Electronics Co.

Krakoff, along with many in the industry, believes the United States will soon catch up to Korea because traditional advertising is losing much of its effectiveness at reaching young men.

"Corporations are dropping hundreds of millions of dollars on a TV ad, and kids don't even watch TV," says Lake, the team owner. "They're missing this demographic."

There are signs that the corporate world is waking up: last week, McNeil Consumer & Specialty Pharmaceuticals, the Johnson & Johnson subsidiary that makes Tylenol, announced it was sponsoring Ouch!, a six-man Counter Strike team.

It is believed to be the first time a non-computer company has sponsored a U.S. videogame team.

Trevor Schmidt, who runs Gotfrag.com, notes that Burger King sponsors games in Germany. He thinks the United States is six to eight months away from

seeing major videogame sponsorship deals by consumer-goods companies.

For all the optimism, several hurdles must be overcome if e-sports are to become a mass phenomenon. For one, the violent game content can be off-putting both to spectators and advertisers.

To the gamers themselves, the mayhem on the computer screen doesn't count as real violence. Apart from the occasional case of wrist-wracking carpal tunnel syndrome, no one gets hurt.

"It's not really even looked at as violent or shooting, it's more about teamwork, like soccer or football," says Lake.

Another hurdle is the very technology that enables these games. Manufacturers keep putting out new games and game consoles, obsoleting the old.

"You have to relearn every year," says Matija Biljeskovic, who competes in pixelated FIFA Soccer. "The way the players recover the ball, the timings, it all changes."

Lastly, watching the games isn't necessarily very enjoyable for someone who hasn't played that particular game.

"In older generations ... I don't think this is ever going to have mainstream appeal," says Lake.

For now, video gaming is not a road to riches for the players.

McNeil would not say how much it is paying Ouch!, but Schmidt estimates the average player on a successful team makes $30,000 to $40,000 a year, mostly from sponsorships and excluding prize money.

Perhaps 50 gamers in the United States are at that level.

Biljeskovic doesn't make that much, since his game doesn't appeal to U.S. sponsors. If his existence is any measure, the life of a semipro video gamer doesn't quite match that of a pro baseball player or rock star in glamour.

The 21-year-old studies electrical engineering at Northern Illinois University and is a single father. He practices after he puts his three-year-old daughter to bed at 9 p.m.

When Biljeskovic tells women that he's a serious video gamer, they're not necessarily excited. But then he tells them that gaming competitions have taken him to Switzerland, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

"They go 'Oh wow, that's awesome!' And of course they ask me to take them with me to Switzerland," he says.

Biljeskovic went on last week to win the U.S. final in FIFA Soccer, which means he'll be part of Team USA in Singapore in November.

Burnout Revenge in Stores Now For Xbox and Playstation 2

Electronic Arts announced that Burnout Revenge is now available at North

American retailers for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and Xbox video game system from Microsoft. The game is rated E10+ by the ESRB and carries an MSRP of $49.95.

The sequel to one of most acclaimed games of 2004, Burnout Revenge straps gamers into the fastest, most dangerous racer on the road. Built for unprecedented destruction, Burnout Revenge challenges gamers to exact their revenge on rush hour traffic, vindictive rival racers and anything else that gets between them and the finish line.

Burnout Revenge has already garnered critical praise, including a perfect score from Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine (5 of 5) and the second highest score ever from Official Xbox Magazine (9.8 of 10). The game was also awarded the Game Critics Award for Best Racing Game at E3 2005.

"Burnout Revenge is testament to the wealth of talent at Criterion," said Paul Lee, President of EA Studios. "The studio continues to deliver genre-defining games that raise the bar for gameplay, technology and creativity."

In addition to tricked out new race, crash and road rage modes, Burnout Revenge takes the series' blistering speed and spectacular destruction to dizzying new heights with an all-new traffic attack mode, challenging gamers to battle the clock and unleash their frustrations on rush hour traffic.

Burnout Revenge was developed by Criterion Software Limited in Guildford, UK. The studio is also developing the explosive first-person shooter BLACK, slated for release in February 2006 on the PlayStation 2 and Xbox.

For more information about Burnout Revenge, please visit
http://burnout.ea.com

Nintendo Unveils Next-generation Game Controller

Nintendo Co. Ltd. surprised the game industry on Friday with an unconventional one-handed controller for its next-generation "Revolution" console that aims to draw in new players.

Motion detector sensors in the controller, which resembles a TV remote, allows players to control the game by wielding it like a sword, waving it like a conductor's baton, or swinging it like a baseball bat depending on the game, Nintendo President Satoru Iwata said in a keynote session at the Tokyo Game Show.

"It's designed like a TV remote because that's familiar to everyone including those who are intimidated by a two-handed controller," said Iwata. "Its intuitive form allows both experienced and new gamers to stand on the same starting line."

Nintendo, known for game characters such as Mario, Donkey Kong and Pokemon, unveiled its console, code-named "Revolution," in May, and said it would launch in 2006. The console will give users access to more than 20 years of games from past Nintendo consoles.

The company had kept its controller under careful wraps, fearing its rivals would copy its idea.

"Revolution" will be competing with Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox 360, which will launch in November, and Sony Corp.'s Playstation 3, expected to launch next spring.

Nintendo dominates the $25 billion portable game industry, but its current GameCube console lags far behind market leader Sony's current generation Playstation 2.

Nintendo's new controller is mainly operated by sensor, which it calls "a direct pointing device" even though it has a control pad and buttons. It also has an expansion to plug in a joystick-like second device.

"It's not a gimmick, and it's different," said Tokyo-based KBC Securities analyst Hiroshi Kamide. "It should get people interested," he said, although he added that he'd like to see the device in action in games.

Iwata said its "Revolution" console and controller was designed to increase the gaming market by drawing in new users across all ages who might be scared off by today's complex and fast action games.

"Our mission is to revive the gaming industry by increasing our user base," said Iwata. "If we can't do that, we might as well stand back and watch the market die off."

Iwata also said he hoped "Revolution" would give small developers an opportunity to create games for a next-generation console without the multi-million dollar budgets and the years of development time required for today's top titles.

"Small developers can compete on creativity not on scale or staff size.... Nintendo is willing to help bring these ideas to life," Iwata said.

Iwata said he was looking forward to seeing how developers will use the pointer, which could be used for both quick action or slow, precise motion. A Nintendo video during the keynote even showed one player using the controller as a dentists' drill.

Asia Tackles Online Game Addiction

Warning: online game playing can be hazardous to health.

So far, such a warning - usually reserved for addictive products like cigarettes and liquor - has yet to appear on the growing stable of online game titles rapidly gaining popularity in Asia.

But that could soon change, as the industry's rapid growth gives rise to a new generation of addicts, like the South Korean man who died of heart failure after playing a game called "StarCraft" for 50 hours at an Internet cafe.

The 28-year-old Korean had quit his job to spend more time playing games, and left his seat only to go to the toilet and take brief naps, according to media reports.

Analysts estimate 1-2 percent of South Korea's online gamers suffer from addiction. The government has designed clinics to help cure addicts, and is

talking with developers about creating advisory patches to alert gamers to the dangers of heavy play.

Hanbit Soft, operator of StarCraft, is also considering opening a "game camp" to educate people on the possible effects of too much play, a spokesman said.

"It has definitely bought some negative social impact," said Jun Fwu Chin, an analyst at data tracking firm IDC.

He said so-called hard-core online gamers - people who play for 20 hours or more a month - now make up about a third of the gaming community.

Game operators, whose titles feature names like "Legend of Mir" and "Ragnarok," say they are trying to be socially responsible by working with regulators and taking their own measures to curtail addictive behavior.

The jury is still largely out on the issue of harmful effects of online gaming.

Most industry players insist that the number of excessive players is still a very small proportion of the overall online gaming population.

Regulators are also treading lightly on the issue, voicing concerns but also being careful not to jeopardize the high growth industry.

The online game sector is growing explosively in Asia, worth an estimated $1.1 billion last year with annual growth set to average 19 percent through 2008, according to IDC.

South Korea is the region's biggest market, worth $397 million last year. But the booming China market is catching up fast, worth $298 million last year when it bypassed Taiwan to become the region's second-biggest.

In another highly publicized case involving addictive behavior, an avid gamer in Shanghai in June was sentenced to life in prison for fatally stabbing a competitor who borrowed and then sold his virtual "dragon saber."

Taiwanese media routinely report about robberies committed to support Internet cafe habits.

Like Korea, China is also in the midst of a campaign to address the issue of online addiction, working with game operators on systems to discourage compulsive behavior.

Analysts said the backlash - and resulting countermeasures - are still in relatively mild early phases, and thus the effects on major operators such as China's Shanda, South Korea's NCSoft, and Taiwan's Gamania, should be muted for now.

China's trial system, which discourages addictive behavior by limiting "experience points" a gamer earns the longer he plays, should have some effect in limiting the problem in that market, said JP Morgan analyst Dick Wei.

The system, reached after extensive consultation from the industry, is considered relatively light for Chinese regulators, who in the past have unilaterally imposed much more draconian measures on other high-growth new media sectors.

"That should stop some of the users from excessive play, but it is not going to stop all the problem," he said. "It could be there are different measures to address this issue."

Taipei has also issued rules forcing Internet cafes to keep their distance from schools.

The city government also requires children under 15 to be accompanied by adults and Internet cafes to post warnings advising players to rest their eyes and stretch their legs.

Many say the raft of new rules, while restricting, are not heavy-handed because governments are trying to avoid killing a potential golden goose.

Reflecting that balance, Singapore earlier this month allowed a man to postpone his military service so he could take part in a computer games competition, as the country tries to promote the industry, according to a media report.

Despite Japan's status as pioneer of the modern gaming industry, addiction is less of a problem there because people are less likely to look to the Web and more often play games on home-bound consoles like Sony's PlayStation, said Hirokazu Hamamura, president of Enterbrain, publisher of Japan's leading gaming magazine.

"There are fewer cases of addiction with console games because they are played differently than online games which progress in real time speed and take a long time to play," he said.

Still, he added, many Japanese companies such as Square Enix include messages in their games warning players not to over-indulge.

Square Enix Chief Executive Officer Yoichi Wada said the issue was one that not only individual companies, but the broader gaming community will have to face in the years ahead.

"In a networked society, this kind of thing always happens," he said at the Reuters Asia Technology and Telecoms Summit in Tokyo on Wednesday. "It cannot be solved by game companies alone. It must be addressed by the game society, the network society.

Sony Recalls 3.6M PlayStation 2 Adaptors

Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. said Tuesday it will recall certain AC adaptors sold worldwide with the slim version of its PlayStation 2 following cases of overheating and melting.

A spokeswoman at Sony Corp.'s game business unit told Dow Jones Newswires about 3.6 million adaptors manufactured between August 2004 and December 2004 with are subject to the recall.

They include about 960,000 units sold in North America, 2.3 million units in Europe and 60,000 units in Japan.

The company said it has received reports of about 40 cases of adaptors overheating and melting in North America.

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Fraud Reveals Workings of Internet Theft

The illicit haul arrived each day by e-mail, the personal details of
computer users tricked by an Internet thief: a victim's name, credit card
number, date of birth, Social Security number, mother's maiden name.

One more Internet "phishing" scam was operating. But this time, private
sleuths soon were hot on the electronic trail of a thief whose online alias
indicated an affinity for the dark side. The case moved ahead in part
because of an underground tipster and the thief's penchant for repeatedly
using the same two passwords - "syerwerz" and "r00tm3."

Unraveling a scheme that also had hacked Kenyon College in Ohio leapt
across continents and ultimately pointed toward a neighborhood in Granby,
Quebec. It offers an extraordinary glimpse behind an Internet fraud that
targets the most trusting computer users.

"This is really lousy," said Johan Fabris of Holmes, Pa. The 82-year-old
grandmother had her online bank account hijacked. Her teenage grandson set
up the account for her to sell hand-sewn doll clothes in Internet auctions.

"This was my first foray into the modern computer world. These damn people,
life is complicated enough," Fabris said.

In such phishing scams, victims are fooled by realistic-looking e-mails
that appear to come from banks or other financial institutions. The
urgent-looking messages direct recipients to verify their accounts by
typing personal details - credit card information, for example - into a Web
site disguised to appear legitimate.

Despite warnings from the government, banks and security experts, consumers
fall victim with disturbing frequency.

One industry organization, the Anti-Phishing Working Group, estimated that
thieves collectively launch more than 14,000 such schemes monthly and that
about 5 percent of computer users respond to the fraudulent messages.

"They make it look completely real," said Jennifer Phillips, 25, of
Martinsville, Ill. She was tricked into disclosing her card number,
mother's maiden name, bank routing number and more. "You wouldn't think
this could happen to anybody living in the middle of cornfields," she said.

Internet sleuths from CardCops Inc. of Malibu, Calif., uncovered the latest
plot.

A tipster pointed them to the thief's e-mail account and gave up the

thief's favorite passwords, which the thief previously had shared with the informant, chief executive Dan Clements said.

CardCops monitors Internet chat rooms and other hacker communications for stolen credit card numbers, then notifies merchants and consumers to block bad purchases.

Clements said he logged into the thief's account - despite concerns this could be illegal - and found what he described as a "den of treasure" for identity crooks.

Clements said he discovered copies of victims' financial information plus tantalizing clues to the thief's real identity. They included an invoice for two Gamecube video games purchased with a stolen credit card and delivered to a family's home in Quebec, plus evidence the thief had tested his schemes using a high-speed Internet connection traced to a home computer in Canada.

"I'm so furious," said Cindy Brenneke of Sunnyvale, Calif., whose Bank of America credit card was used to buy the games.

She had been similarly tricked into disclosing her card number. "It was total stupidity," she said. Brenneke said roughly $4,000 in fraudulent charges were run up for music, movies and video games on Web sites within days of her mistake.

The person listed on the invoice as receiving the video games in Quebec denied any involvement in Internet fraud, telling The Associated Press in a brief interview he did nothing wrong.

But shortly after the interview, the e-mail inbox used for the purchases was mysteriously emptied and the password changed, said Clements, who said he kept copies of everything he found.

The fraud illustrates the conflict between quickly warning potential victims and preserving evidence for police to investigate. Clements said he immediately notified each consumer whose information he found in the inbox and later reported the findings to police before the AP called the home in Quebec.

The case also shows how hard it can be to get the attention of police.

Phillips said she called police in Illinois to complain, but a detective never called back. Brenneke said police in California offered to open a file on her case as a courtesy, but told her Canadian authorities would have to investigate. "It kind of stinks," Brenneke said.

Such experiences are common.

"Unquestionably, there are online crooks who are getting away with impunity," said Beryl Howell, a former top lawyer with the Senate Judiciary Committee. "Victims are fending for themselves."

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Quebec said it does not investigate online financial crimes. A city detective in Granby referred the case to provincial police but cautioned that any investigation would take months.

"There's sort of a hole in enforcement," acknowledged Marc Gosselin, a cybercrimes investigator for the Mounties.

Clements said he was unconcerned about the legal risks of reading the thief's e-mails, even though a former Justice Department lawyer said it could land Clements in trouble.

"Law enforcement can't allow self-help vigilantes to go around and do this," said Marc Zwillinger, a former cybercrimes prosecutor.

In the Canadian-based scheme, messages were routed through a computer in Macedonia. Official-looking e-mails were sent randomly on Aug. 23 directing computer users to visit a Web page and confirm details about their bank accounts. The counterfeit e-mails reassured would-be victims "this security measure will protect our customers from account thefts and any other fraudulent activities."

But the Web page did not belong to any bank.

Officials at Kenyon College in Ohio said someone hacked into a school computer Aug. 22 and set up the fake banking page. It transmitted victims' personal information to the Canadian e-mail inbox plus two other addresses believed to belong to thieves.

"It looked very genuine," said Tam Nguyen of Huntersville, N.C., who was tricked into revealing his credit card number, Social Security number, mother's maiden name and more.

"My wife saw the e-mail and told me to take care of it right away. Stupid me, I just went ahead and gave up everything," he said.

The school's director of information systems, Ron Griggs, said the break-in was traced to the same high-speed Internet account in Canada used to run early tests of the fraud scheme. He said 32 people visited the fake banking Web site before someone complained. The college shut off access Aug. 24.

In Illinois, Jennifer Phillips canceled her compromised credit account and is more suspicious these days. But she is under no illusion that what happened to her was an isolated case.

In the days after discovering she had been tricked, Phillips said she received two more urgent-looking e-mails pressing her to verify her bank account online.

This time, she deleted them.

Employees Ignore Security Risks

Enterprises need to do a better job of educating their workers about potential online security risks, according to security authority Trend Micro.

The results of a recent study by the company reveal that many employees in businesses around the world are more likely to engage in riskier online behavior at work than at home, believing, wrongly in some cases, that their I.T. departments will protect them.

In a survey that polled some 1,200 employees in the U.S., Germany and Japan, 39 percent believed that I.T. could prevent them from falling prey to threats like spyware and phishing. This belief prompted many of them to

admit risky online behavior. Of those who admitted to such activity, 63 percent said that they do so because they feel they are protected by security software installed on their computers by their employers.

Attitudes regarding security risks in the workplace vary according to geographic region and the type of threat, the study shows. For example, in Germany, only 14 percent of enterprise workers expressed confidence that their I.T. departments could deal with phishing attacks, while that number was 40 percent in Japan and 24 percent in the U.S.

And the size of a business seems to have an impact on awareness of security risks, said Bob Hansmann, senior product marketing manager at Trend Micro. In Japan and Germany, those in larger enterprises are more aware of security threats than workers in organizations of 500 or fewer employees. But in the U.S., users in smaller businesses have a higher awareness of threats such as spam, viruses and spyware, he said.

"So the question is whether large enterprise users in the U.S. are less aware of security risks because of overconfidence in the I.T. department's ability to handle those risks," said Hansmann. "The bottom line is that everyone has to be part of the solution."

The challenge for businesses, both large and small, is to implement an Internet policy enforcement strategy, ensuring that software patches throughout the I.T. system are applied and updated, and that antivirus applications are working and current. "Those steps will address the bulk of threats seen this year," Hansmann said.

Employers should remind their workers that their online behavior presents security risks, he added, including the downloading of games or other files that provide access to sensitive information. "But if the student doesn't want to learn, the teacher's efforts are wasted," said Hansmann.

Internet Tax Plan Emerges - Again

In October, some states will begin complying with the Streamlined Sales Tax Agreement (SSTA) - a national effort to simplify sales-tax jurisdictions and pave the way to uniform collection of sales tax on purchases made over the Internet and through other remote channels.

While compliance with the program is voluntary, currently 13 states have signed up to participate in it. Those that plan to put it in place have expressed renewed enthusiasm for making tax collection by out-of-state vendors mandatory.

Previous attempts to create a sales-tax system to cover e-commerce providers have languished in Congress, but proponents of such proposals are hoping that the currently very complicated tax system will renew the debate in Congress and attract more states to adopt the SSTA.

The issue of how to collect taxes from e-commerce companies has turned out to be a thorny one because it involves whether a company doing business online also has brick-and-mortar stores in certain states.

Some feel the SSTA not only will help iron out those complications, but also will reinvigorate the debate over sales tax and Internet companies.

The National Governors Association and the National Council of State Legislators have been lobbying Congress to make it mandatory for all companies to collect sales tax from customers in states that subscribe to the SSTA.

Part of the challenge in creating an effective Net tax plan is building in protections for small businesses, meaning they would be compensated for changes to their tax systems as well as for the additional training and processing expenses that small business would have to shoulder, said Steve DelBianco, executive director of the NetChoice Coalition, whose members include eBay, America Online and Orbitz.

NetChoice is supportive of the streamlined system, but its members feel that more must be done at a state level to examine the issue and simplify its processes.

"There's a lot left to prove," said DelBianco. "In particular, there's nothing in the agreement about compensating retailers for the change in their systems, and we feel that's a major component that needs to be added."

But adoption of the SSTA in October is a significant first step, he added. "It's a great start, and it should provide some direction for the future."

Yahoo Founder Explains China E-Mail Move

Yahoo had to comply with a demand by Chinese authorities to provide information about a personal e-mail of a journalist who was later convicted under state secrecy laws and sentenced to 10 years in prison, the company's co-founder Jerry Yang said Saturday.

Yang, responding to questions during an Internet forum in this eastern Chinese resort city, said he could not discuss the details of the case involving Shi Tao, a former writer for the financial publication Contemporary Business News.

Overseas-based human rights groups disclosed days earlier that Yahoo Holdings (Hong Kong) Ltd., part of Yahoo's global network, provided e-mail account information that helped lead to Shi's conviction.

Yahoo earlier defended its move, saying it was obliged to comply with Chinese laws and regulations.

The demand for the information was a "legal order" and Yahoo gets such requests from law enforcement agencies all the time, and not just in China, Yang told the forum.

But he added, "I cannot talk about the details of this case."

Other Chinese journalists have faced similar charges of violating vague security laws as communist leaders struggle to maintain control of information in the burgeoning Internet era.

Despite government information sharing requirements and other restrictions, Yahoo and its major rivals have been expanding their presence in mainland China in hopes of reaching more of the country's fast-growing population of Internet users, which now number more than 100 million.

Yahoo paid $1 billion for a 40 percent stake in Alibaba.com, host of the Hangzhou conference, last month.

New York-based Human Rights in China and the Paris-based international media watchdog Reporters Without Borders sent an open letter addressed to former U.S. President Bill Clinton, who was a keynote speaker at the Internet forum, urging him to bring up Shi's case during his visit to China.

But Clinton only alluded to the risks faced by Internet users targeted by the authorities for whatever reason.

"The Internet, no matter what political system a country has, and our political system is different from yours, the Internet is having significant political and social consequences and they cannot be erased," he said.

"The political system's limits on freedom of speech ... have not seemed to have any adverse consequences on e-commerce," he said. "It's something you'll all have to watch and see your way through," he said.

According to Reporters Without Borders, court papers show that Yahoo Holdings (Hong Kong) Ltd. gave Chinese investigators information that helped them trace a personal Yahoo e-mail to Shi's computer.

It says Shi was convicted for sending notes on a government circular spelling out restrictions on the media in his e-mail. He was seized in November at his home in the northwestern province of Shanxi.

The case is the latest instance in which a prominent high-tech company has faced accusations of cooperating with Chinese authorities to gain favor in a country that's expected to become an Internet gold mine.

Sunnyvale, California-based Yahoo and two of its biggest rivals, Google Inc. and Microsoft Corp.'s MSN, previously have come under attack for censoring online news sites and Web logs, or blogs, featuring content that China's communist government wants to suppress.

Lexmark Puts Twist on Photo Sharing

Lexmark, in what it claims is a first, has crossed an inkjet with a CD drive, to create a new type of multifunction printer.

The Lexington, Ky., company on Monday introduced the P450, a $199, 4-inch by 6-inch inkjet photo printer that incorporates a CD burner.

The P450 is like many other Lexmark International Inc. models in that it's a thermal inkjet designed to be small, relatively portable and to operate independently of a Microsoft Corp. Windows-based PC or Apple Computer Inc. Macintosh. But the company believes consumers will use the printer to share and archive digital photos on CDs, something that's not usually possible in the absence of a computer, in addition to editing and printing them.

"The Lexmark P450 brings more photo processing functions to the home. People can now save and organize their digital photos on CD, print from a cell phone, view their photos on a television and much more," Najib Bahous,

president of Lexmark's Consumer Printer Division, said in a statement.

Lexmark's P450 also includes a 2.4-inch display for viewing photos, along with the ability to edit the images with functions such as crop, rotate, color fix and redeye remove.

The machine also comes with a compliment of ports, including a PictBridge port, which allows it to connect directly to numerous cameras, as well as slots for memory cards, including CompactFlash, SmartMedia Card, Sony Corp.'s MemoryStick, Secure Digital, MultiMediaCard and xD Card.

The P450 can also print JPEG format photo files stored on USB (Universal Serial Bus) drives as well as run off shots taken with camera phones using Bluetooth wireless and show pictures on a television screen, provided consumers purchase the correct Bluetooth and TV adapters.

The P450, which will compete with the likes of Hewlett-Packard Co.'s Photosmart 375, will begin shipping next month in the United States and will also be available internationally.

The P450 will be available at retailers including Circuit City, Staples and Target, as well as via QVC Inc.'s television sales channel and the online sites of retailers Best Buy Co. Inc. and Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Lexmark said.

Google Posts Blog Search

Google Inc. unveiled Wednesday a beta version of its search engine for Weblogs, more commonly known as blogs.

The company, which first jumped into the online journal market in 2003 with its buyout of popular hosting service Blogger, said that it launched the search tool in an effort to spur continued growth of the blogging phenomenon. Technorati, a blog search site that will compete with Google's offering, currently lists over 17 million sites and 1.5 billion links in its own index, up from only 100,000 sites two years ago.

The beta site retains Google's traditional clean presentation and offers an advanced search function that allows users to focus their queries on blogs related to specific titles or authors. The tool also gives people the ability to search on blog posts written within a certain timeframe, or to filter out sites containing objectionable language. The blog search promises to list pages written in English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Brazilian Portuguese, among other languages.

Google said the tool will eventually aim to include every blog worldwide that publishes a site feed via RSS or Atom technology, regardless of what company or service is hosting the pages. The company will soon offer a method for people to manually add sites not already picked up by its index and said that it will also respect the privacy of blogs that do not offer feeds.

A quick query aimed at a popular blog topic such as politics garners over 500,000 individual results, while a search around something more specific such as iPod battery life finds roughly 8,000 links. Unsurprisingly, well over 400,000 pages have already been indexed regarding the devastation of

Hurricane Katrina.

Despite pledging that it remains a "strong believer in the self-publishing phenomenon represented by blogging," and that it hopes the new search tool may "inspire many to join the revolution themselves," Google has also established its belief that there should be limits to people's online descriptions. A former Google employee, Mark Jen, left the firm only several weeks after the search giant asked him to remove some controversial comments he had made about the firm in his own blog.

Yahoo to Begin Testing E-mail Upgrade

Yahoo Inc. on Wednesday will begin testing a sleeker version of its free e-mail service, shifting to a more dynamic design that mimics the look and feel of a computer desktop application like Microsoft Corp.'s Outlook.

The company plans to invite a "sizable" portion of its current e-mail accountholders to experiment with the retooled service, said Yahoo spokeswoman Karen Mahon, who declined to be more specific.

If the test goes well, all of Yahoo's e-mail users - an audience that spans tens of millions - eventually will be converted to the new system.

Yahoo imported most of the changes from Oddpost, an e-mail startup the company bought for an undisclosed amount last year.

The overhaul, described as the most extensive since Yahoo began offering free e-mail accounts eight years ago, represents the latest salvo in a technological tug-of-war for online traffic.

For the past two years, Yahoo and its main Internet rivals - Google Inc., AOL and Microsoft's MSN.com - have been unveiling a series of upgrades aimed at attracting and retaining their Web audiences so they remain appealing outlets for advertisers.

Google, which runs the Internet's most popular search engine, shook things up in the e-mail market last year by introducing a free service that included 250 times more storage than some of its rivals. Yahoo and MSN subsequently matched Google, which responded by more than doubling its e-mail storage limit to 2.5 gigabytes.

More recently, the major e-mail providers have been introducing other bells and whistles to keep their users happy and coming back for more ads. Yahoo's upgrade follows recent AOL improvements meant to make its e-mail service quicker and easier to use.

"Last year was the year of storage in e-mail, but now the real competition seems to be about who has the coolest user interfaces," Radicati Group analyst Marcel Nienhuis said.

Yahoo's e-mail service is currently leading the pack, with 63.6 million unique U.S. visitors during July, according to the most recent figures from comScore Media Metrix, a research firm. AOL ranked second with 48.7 million visitors followed by MSN's Hotmail (44.4 million), Comcast Corp.'s Webmail (5.6 million) and Google's Gmail (5.4 million).

With its changes, Yahoo's e-mail will look more like a traditional inbox

that operates through a software program installed on a computer hard drive instead of being hosted on the Internet. Yet Yahoo's redesigned service still relies on a Web browser and won't require its users to install anything on their computers.

Using "dynamic" html, Yahoo's e-mail accounts will feature an inbox containing all e-mails on the top of the page with a separate pane for reading e-mail below it. The feature is meant to enable users to scroll through an e-mail folder without having to click back and forth between Web pages.

Yahoo's test audience also will use a computer mouse to "drag and drop" e-mails from one folder to another and search all the content, including attachments, stored in the inbox.

"Our competition has been doing some interesting things in e-mail, but we think we have leapfrogged them all with all these new features," said Ethan Diamond, an Oddpost co-founder who works for Yahoo as a director of product management.

Macworld Expo Boston Cancelled

IDG World Expo on Friday said that have cancelled Macworld Expo Boston and will instead focus their efforts on a single conference and expo in San Francisco. The event, which has been a mainstay of East Coast conferences for almost 20 years, has been axed just two years after returning to Boston from New York City.

The marketplace and our own research have made it clear that the industry prefers one main industry event, Mike Sponseller, spokesperson for IDG World Expo, told MacCentral. Based on the industry s input, we will be refocusing all of our resources to produce Macworld in San Francisco.

The relationship between Apple and IDG World Expo is very good according to Sponseller. The two companies continue to work together on strategies and work together on every facet of the San Francisco event.

The decision of how to best serve the Mac community is not one we take lightly, said Sponseller.

Many considered moving Macworld Expo back to Boston a mistake from the start, but show organizers continued on the path even without support from Apple. IDG would not say whether they now considered the move a mistake.

At this point, that really isn t important, said Sponseller. It was a strategic decision made by prior management and we really can t answer for them.

IDG World Expo said the 2005 Macworld in San Francisco showed growth from the previous year with an 11 percent overall attendance increase. The attendance certification audit performed by Exhibit Surveys, Inc. found that there were nearly 36,000 overall visitors at Macworld San Francisco 2005.

There was also a 13 percent increase in the number of paid conference delegates; a 10 percent increase in the number of exhibitors; and a 31 percent increase in the average number of hours spent on the exhibit hall

floor by attendees.

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